

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01 AID-20 TRSE-00

DOT-00 FAA-00 DRC-01 /156 W
----- 097066

R 141015Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 650

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 676

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MV

SUBJ: MALDIVES: RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDE WORLD

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: COLOMBO 3113, DEC 18, 1973 (NOTAL)

1. MALDIVES PRIME MINISTER (ALSO FOREIGN MINISTER) AHAMED ZAKI IS CURRENTLY ON VISIT TO INDIA, HIS FIRST OFFICIAL TOUR OUTSIDE MALDIVES. INDIA HAS MOVED QUICKLY TO EXPLOIT POOR STATE OF MALDIVIAN RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA (REFTEL) IN ORDER TO ENHANCE ITS OWN PRESENCE IN MALDIVES. ACCORDING TO INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION FIRST SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, STATE BANK OF INDIA HAS ESTABLISHED SUCCESSFUL BRANCH IN MALE WITH STAFF OF 40 AND TELETYPE LINK BETWEEN BOMBAY AND MALE IS NOW IN OPERATION. BURGEONING TOURIST INDUSTRY IN MALDIVES HAS LED TO
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REGULAR SCHEDULE OF SIX FLIGHTS PER WEEK BETWEEN COLOMBO

AND MALE BY AIR CEYLON AND SRI LANKA AIR FORCE (SLAF), AND INDIANS WOULD LIKE TO GET SOME OF THIS BUSINESS. BUT THEIR ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH DIRECT AIR LINK WITH INDIA HAVE FOUNDERED ON SHORT LENGTH OF HULULU AIRPORT IN MALE ATOLL WHICH WOULD PERMIT FLIGHTS ONLY TO TRIVANDRUM. AS TRIVANDRUM IS NOT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND LOCAL TRAFFIC DEMAND WOULD NOT JUSTIFY REGULAR SERVICE, PLAN FOR AIR SERVICE TO INDIA IS CURRENTLY IN ABEYANCE. MALDIVIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL TELLS US GOM EXPECTS TO OPEN CONSULATE IN BOMBAY MOMENTARILY AND RUMOR HAS IT THAT ALI MANIKU MAY BE NAMED HONORARY CONSUL GENERAL AND RUN NEWLY ESTABLISHED MALDIVIAN TRADING CORPORATION IN BOMBAY (FORMERLY IN COLOMBO).

2. SANER HEADS IN GSL HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH GOM FOLLOWING INEPT HANDLING OF ALI MANIKU INCIDENT. RAMIFICATIONS OF INCIDENT HAVE BEEN TRANSFER OF OPERATIONS OF GOM'S SHIPPING COMPANY MALSHIP TO SINGAPORE AND WITHDRAWAL OF GOM'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE TRANSACTIONS (EXCEPT BILATERAL) FROM SRI LANKA CENTRAL BANK. CEYLONSE OVERTURES HAVE INCLUDED ALLOWING SLAF COMMANDER TO ACT AS ADVISER TO RECENTLY FORMED AIR MALDIVES, DECEMBER VISIT BY HIGH-LEVEL CEYLONSE DELEGATION LED BY FOREIGN SECRETARY W.T. JAYASINGHE, AND MID-FEB GOODWILL VISIT TO MALDIVES BY SRI LANKA NAVY'S FLAGSHIP, "GAJABAHU", AND TWO NAVY PATROL CRAFT. THESE CEYLONSE EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION HAVE, ACCORDING TO BOTH SIDES, MET WITH CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS. WE ARE TOLD SOME SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN WORKED OUT AT POLITICAL LEVEL TO RESOLVE ALI MANIKU'S ALLEGED FOREIGN EXCHANGE VIOLATIONS. WE DO NOT KNOW DETAILS NOR HAS HE APPEARED IN COLOMBO SINCE INCIDENT WITH CEYLONSE CUSTOMS OFFICIALS. PRESIDENT NASIR, AND WIFE HOWEVER, ARE CURRENTLY IN COLOMBO, REPORTEDLY FOR TWO MONTHS AWAITING ARRIVAL OF NEW OFFSPRING, WHICH SUGGESTS SOME IMPROVEMENT IN SRI LANKA - MALDIVES RELATIONS.

3. GOM'S ATTEMPTS TO DIVERSIFY ITS FOREIGN CONNECTIONS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE OCCURRED EVEN IF MANIKU INCIDENT HAD NOT HAPPENED. MALDIVIANS HAVE FOR SOME TIME EXPRESSED CONTEMPT FOR CEYLONSE MISMANAGEMENT OF THEIR OWN ECONOMY, WHICH HAS MADE GYH NO LONGER ABLE TO RESPOND TO GOM'S REQUESTS FOR EVEN SMALL ECONOMIC INPUTS. MALDIVIANS NOW APPEAR TO BE PLAYING OFF

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RUSSIANS AND INDIANS ON ONE SIDE AGAINST CHINESE, PAKISTANIS, AND CEYLONSE ON OTHER WITH SOME SUCCESS. INDIAN ACHIEVEMENTS IN INCREASING TIES WITH GOM HAVE LED TO CONSIDERABLE SCURRYING TO MALE BY OTHERS. TO HAVE REAL FLEXIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE FROM SRI LANKA IT DESIRES, HOWEVER, GOM WILL HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE TO PROVIDE AIRPORT AT MALE UP TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDSSO THAT DIRECT CONNECTIONS WITH OUTSIDE WORLD, OTHER THAN COLOMBO, CAN BE ESTABLISHED. MONETARY AND TECHNICAL

ASSISTANCE FOR SUCH AIRPORT IS LIKELY TO OCCUPY MALDIVIAN
FOREIGN POLICY ATTENTION FOR SOME TIME TO COME, INASMUCH AS
\$20 - \$25 MILLION PRICE TAG FOR SUCH AIRPORT (ACCORDING TO
SLAF COMMANDERS ESTIMATE) IS APT TO MAKE POTENTIAL SUITORS
VERY WARY.
VAN HOLLEN

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